



LESSON 4

JESUS AND ZACCHAEUS

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: Jesus Seeks and Saves Us

SCRIPTURE: Luke 19

GOD'S BIG STORY: Jesus seeks out a tax collector named Zacchaeus and asks to be a guest in his home where Zacchaeus changes his ways, and Jesus welcomes him into God's family.

WORD OF WONDER: God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son. Anyone who believes in him will not die but will have eternal life. God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world. He sent his Son to save the world through him. —John 3:16–17

CURIOSITY

BELIEF

FAITH

- Welcome Question: When did someone make you feel extra special? What did they do to make you feel this way?
- Curiosity Questions
- Word of Wonder Activity
- God's Big Story
- Discussion Questions for Elementary Kids and Preteens
- Small Group Prayer Time
- LARGE GROUP
- Elementary Responding in Worship: Seek and Save Prayer Wall
- Preteen Responding in Worship: Full-Body Prayers



INVITATION

We invite you to pause, listen, and shift your gaze toward the Father ...

LESSON AT A GLANCE

WONDER TRUTH: Jesus Seeks and Saves Us

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WORD OF WONDER: John 3:16–17

As you prepare for this lesson, I invite you to pause for a moment to prepare your heart. Then read Luke 19:1–10.

Jesus came to seek and save us. Why? Because He loves us. I can only imagine what the people in the crowd near Zacchaeus were thinking, but I'm quite certain we've all been there. Maybe there's been a time when you felt like you were missing out or wondered why someone else got to do something you so badly wanted to be a part of ... a time when you wanted to be seen.

Read the passage again but imagine the story from Zacchaeus' perspective this time. You were determined to see Jesus and wouldn't let the towering crowd stop you. So, you scurried up a tree, its branches scratching your legs, and cautiously climbed onto a limb. Then you saw Him. And He saw you. Stopping, He looked up and spoke to you. Of all the people in the crowd that day, Jesus sought you out. Jesus sought you and saved you from the sin you were powerless to save yourself from.

That's the type of love Jesus has. This story is about more than a short man in the tree—it's about Jesus finding us wherever we are.

You're worth finding. Never forget that.

—**Andrae Jones**

Nextgen Pastor

Contributor to Wonder Ink

DID YOU KNOW?

FOUNDATION BUILDING BLOCKS

WHO?

In the classic Zacchaeus song, Zacchaeus is described as a “wee little man.” But he was the chief tax collector in the region, meaning he earned commission from what the tax collectors beneath him received from the Jewish people. He was very wealthy and powerful.

WHAT?

Zacchaeus, a Jewish man, was making money off his own people and identifying with the Romans, who oppressed the Jews. No wonder everyone grumbled when Jesus invited Himself to Zacchaeus’ house. Once again, Jesus was willing to associate with all people—righteous, sinners, wealthy, poor, powerful, and the outcast.

WHERE?

Jesus passes through Jericho as He heads west toward Jerusalem and the cross. Jericho was the first place the Israelites conquered when they entered the promised land (Joshua 6), and it’s the Jericho road where the story of the good Samaritan takes place (Luke 10).

WHEN?

In the previous chapter, Luke records Jesus’ conversation with a rich ruler who failed to follow Jesus’ advice and went away sad because he wanted to keep his wealth (Luke 18). Contrast this with Zacchaeus, who heard from Jesus and immediately realized his earthly wealth was unimportant compared to the kingdom of God.

CONNECTING TO GOD’S BIG STORY:

With Zacchaeus, Jesus showed that no one is beyond being welcomed into God’s kingdom if they are willing to repent. Throughout His ministry, Jesus sought and saved lost people. He called Matthew the tax collector to follow Him (Matthew 9:13), talked with a Samaritan woman (John 4), and told parables about lost things (Luke 15).

Small Group

Spark curiosity and get kids thinking about the wonder of God.

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Pre-Service Connection (15–20 min)

RESOURCES: whiteboard, poster paper, or butcher paper, writing utensils, board games or games

Games & Activities Guide

Small group leaders should be seated in place in their small groups 20 minutes prior to service time. Have activities ready to keep children occupied and engaged WITH you. This time is important to build relationships, welcome new kids, and keep structure in the room - you should be an active participant with them! Learn the kids names, and make sure they all know yours too!

As kids arrive ...

Warmly welcome new friends, and introduce them to your group.

Use the Welcome Question and the following "I'm Curious" questions to engage kids. Say "I'm curious.." before each question and give kids an chance to think before answering each one. After each question, consider having kids share their ideas with a neighbor before you call on one or two of them to share with the group.

Consider having a whiteboard or poster for kids to write or draw answers to any of the questions:

- **Have you ever done something to make someone else's day better? Tell us about it.**
- **Do you think Jesus can change someone's life? Can you think of an example of a time He did?**

(Note that kids might share about a story from their lives or from the Bible.)

When did someone make you feel extra special? What did they do to make you feel this way?

Word of Wonder Activity

WORD OF WONDER

God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son. Anyone who believes in him will not die but will have eternal life. God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world. He sent his Son to save the world through him.

—John 3:16–17 (NirV)

SUPPLIES: Bible, chairs (1 per kid minus 1), floor dots (1 per kid minus 1, optional)

RESOURCES: “John 3:16” from the [Hanging Out with Jesus Elementary Spotify playlist](#)

In God’s big story today, we saw Jesus seeking and saving Zacchaeus. The people in the crowd didn’t like Zacchaeus because he was a tax collector, but Jesus is different from the crowd. Jesus loved Zacchaeus, and He loves us too! Let’s say our Word of Wonder together as we remember God’s amazing love for us! Open your Bible to John 3:16–17. If possible, display the Word of Wonder Slide or watch the [Elementary Word of Wonder Video](#). Read John 3:16–17 several times together.

Gather the kids in a circle and set up a chair for every kid but one. Alternatively, place floor dots on the floor. Let’s play musical chairs to practice our verse! Play “John 3:16” from the [Hanging Out with Jesus Elementary Spotify playlist](#) or other upbeat worship music as kids play musical chairs. Each time you stop the music, invite the kid without a chair to recite as much of the Word of Wonder as she can and encourage the rest of the group to help her as needed. To keep kids engaged, let everyone stay in the game the whole time. At the end of the game, invite the kids to say the verse one more time all together.

Leader Tip: For Younger Kids. Simplify the game by setting up the same number of chairs as there are kids. Every time you stop the music, invite all the kids to say the verse together.

God’s Big Story

SUPPLIES: Bibles (1 per kid)

Let your kids know that the story they’re about to hear comes straight from the Bible—God’s Word. Explain that it’s in Luke, the third book in the New Testament. Have them open to Luke 19:1. Encourage your volunteers to help kids find the passage.

Zacchaeus was a tax collector, a job that made many people dislike him. Even so, Zacchaeus was curious about Jesus and went out of his way to see Him. Jesus surprised everyone by stopping, calling Zacchaeus by name, and going to his house. As you read, think about what this story shows you about who Jesus looks for and why His love can change a person’s life.

Read Luke 19:1-10 together.

Elementary Questions

- **What did Zacchaeus do so he could see Jesus?** (*climbed a sycamore-fig tree*)
- **What did Jesus say when He saw Zacchaeus up in the tree?** (“Zacchaeus, come down at once. I must stay at your house today” [Luke 19:5].)
- **How did the people in the crowd feel when Jesus went to Zacchaeus’ house? Why do you think they may have felt this way?** (*Possible answers: They were unhappy, upset, angry because as a tax collector, Zacchaeus worked for the Romans who mistreated the Jews and may have made extra money dishonestly.*)
- **What big things did Zacchaeus do after welcoming Jesus to his house?** (*He gave half of what he owned to people who were poor and paid back four times anything he had gotten by cheating.*)
- **Before he met Jesus, Zacchaeus was spiritually lost. What do you think it means to be spiritually lost?** (*Possible answers: to be living without Jesus; to not realize that Jesus loves you, died for you, offers you forgiveness and life forever with Him*)
- **Jesus seeks and saves us like He did for Zacchaeus. What does this show you about Jesus? What does it show about how He feels about you?**

Jesus came to seek and save the lost. Because of Him, everyone is able to be a part of God’s family! Let’s thank God in prayer for sending His Son to change our hearts and give us a place we’ll always belong.

Preteen Questions

- **What did Jesus say when He saw Zacchaeus up in the tree?** (“Zacchaeus, come down at once. I must stay at your house today” [Luke 19:5].)
- **Why do you think the crowd got upset when Jesus wanted to stay in Zacchaeus’ home?** (*Possible answers: Zacchaeus was a tax collector who worked for the Romans and likely cheated Jews to make money; the people considered him a “sinner,” Jesus was a Jewish teacher who would have been expected to stay away from tax collectors.*)
- **How was Zacchaeus different at the start of today’s story than at the end? Why do you think he changed?**
- **Do you think the big change in Zacchaeus affected the people around him? How so? Do you think the way you live as a Jesus-follower affects the people around you? How so?**
- **Jesus seeks and saves us like He did for Zacchaeus. What does this show you about Jesus? What does it show about how He feels about you?**

Jesus came to seek and save the lost. Because of Him, everyone is able to be a part of God’s family! Let’s thank God in prayer for sending His Son to change our hearts and give us a place we’ll always belong.

Small Group Prayer Time

Invite kids to share any prayer requests or praises. Give kids a few moments to pray over each of the requests silently. Ask whether any of the kids want to pray for the group out loud, but if not, that’s OK! You can close in prayer and encourage kids that God always hears their prayers no matter how or when they pray.

Head to Large Group!

Return and finish the rest of this guide before parents arrive.

Elementary Responding in Worship: Seek and Save Prayer Wall

SUPPLIES: butcher paper or large, empty wall space; tape; note cards (3 per kid); writing utensils; coloring utensils; paper (optional); marker (optional)

RESOURCES: [Hanging Out with Jesus Elementary Spotify playlist](#) (optional)

Ahead of time, prepare space to be a prayer wall by taping butcher paper to the wall or clearing a large, empty space on the wall within kids' reach. Kids will be writing on note cards and taping them on the prayer wall. Consider writing the Wonder Truth ("Jesus Seeks and Saves Us") across the top of the butcher paper or on a sheet of paper that you tape to the designated prayer wall. Before the activity begins, write each kid's name on three note cards and mix up the note cards. This is a great task for a volunteer to do as kids arrive.

Gather the kids in front of the designated prayer wall. **We're going to reflect on Jesus' love for us by writing and drawing our prayers and putting them on a prayer wall, but before we begin, let's do a little activity. Scatter the prepared note cards all around the room. When I say, "Go," your job is to find three note cards with your name on them. Once you find all three, you can return to your seat.**

Leader Tip: If your group is large, give each kid three note cards and have them write their own names on them. Then collect the cards, shuffle them, and scatter them around the room.

Great job seeking out the cards with your name on them! Some of you had to look for a long time to find all three, but you didn't give up. You kept seeking until you found what you were looking for! Today in God's big story, Jesus could have given up on Zacchaeus. After all, Zacchaeus was a tax collector who probably cheated other people out of their money. But Jesus loved Zacchaeus and kept seeking Him until Zacchaeus turned away from his old way of doing things and toward Jesus. Jesus loves us too, and He doesn't give up on us! Let's spend some time talking with Jesus now by writing or drawing prayers to Him.

Give each kid a writing utensil and set coloring utensils out as well. **Jesus loves you always and no matter what! No matter what you've done in the past, Jesus loves you and invites you to come to Him. On the back of one of your cards, thank Jesus for His love.** Give kids time to write or draw on a note card.

Jesus seeks and saves you! On the back of a different card, tell Jesus what that means to you. Give kids time to write or draw their thoughts to Jesus on a note card.

If Jesus was sitting next to you right now, what would you say to Him? Would you ask Him to help you with a certain situation? Would you praise Him for something He has done in your life?

On the back of your third card, write or draw whatever you want to tell Jesus. Give kids time to write or draw on a note card.

When kids finish writing and drawing on their cards, invite them to come up and tape their cards to the prayer wall. They can tape them with their writings/drawings facing out, or if they prefer to keep their prayers between them and Jesus, they can tape their cards with their writings/drawing facing the wall. Consider softly playing music from the [Hanging Out with Jesus Elementary Spotify playlist](#) throughout this response time.

Preteen Responding in Worship: Full-Body Prayers

SUPPLIES: paper (optional), writing utensils (optional), coloring utensils (optional)

RESOURCES: [Hanging Out with Jesus Elementary Spotify playlist](#)

Gather the kids. **Today in God's big story, we saw different people doing different things and actions.**

For example, Zacchaeus wanted so badly to see Jesus that he climbed a tree, and Jesus wanted so badly to spend time with Zacchaeus that He called him down from that tree and went to his house! Jesus loves us and will stop at nothing to seek and save us! Let's spend some time talking with Jesus in prayer, but rather than just say our prayers with words, let's use our entire bodies!

Invite kids to spread out. Encourage them to close their eyes to imagine each scene as you describe it. **We read in the Bible that as Jesus became more well known, people came from all over to see Him as He traveled from town to town. As Jesus walked through Jericho, Zacchaeus climbed a tree to get a better view of Jesus. Show this climbing action with your body.** Pause for kids to respond. They can continue to "climb" or can sit or stand still as you continue:

- **Imagine you're in the tree and have a clear view of Jesus. What do you see?** Encourage kids to share their answers.
- **If you could shout out to Jesus from the tree, what would you say?** Go ahead and tell Him in prayer now. Give kids time to pray. Some may want to actually say their words to Jesus out loud, which is OK!

Jesus looked up and saw Zacchaeus. Show Jesus' actions with your body. Pause for kids to respond.

- **What expression do you think was on Jesus' face when He looked at Zacchaeus?** Kids can answer with words or by showing the expression on their own faces.
- **Now imagine Jesus is looking up at you right now. What expression do you think is on His face?** Kids can answer with words or by showing the expression on their own faces.
- **What do you want to tell Jesus?** Give kids time to pray.

Zacchaeus invited Jesus into his home. Show this action. Pause for kids to respond.

- **What parts of your life do you want to invite Jesus into?** Invite kids to talk with Jesus in prayer.

Give kids time to talk with Jesus in prayer. Consider setting out paper and writing/coloring utensils for kids who like to draw or journal their prayers. Remind them that Jesus loves them and hears all their prayers, whether they pray silently, out loud, with written words, in pictures, or in any other way. Play music from the [Hanging Out with Jesus Elementary playlist](#) as kids pray.